

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A system, comprising:
 - a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers via a communication connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of at least one service provider of the service providers;
 - a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;
 - a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the selected service provider in response to the selection; and
 - a fourth logic unit to search a database for an alternate service provider, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein, in response to a connection established between the selected service provider and the user, the fourth logic unit presents the alternate service provider after communication is completed with the service provider.
4. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.
5. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 4, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

6. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 4, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.
7. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the selection is received over a telephone connection.
8. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the selection is received over the communication connection which includes an Internet connection.
- 9-12. (Canceled)
13. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein a set of criteria to search the database for the alternative service provider is established by a system administrator of the system.
- 14-16. (Canceled)
17. (Previously Presented) A system for establishing a real-time communication connection between two parties, the system comprising:
a communications interface; and
a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer having:
a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers over an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider of the service providers;
a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the selected service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider, wherein the set of criteria comprises one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, subject matter, and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users.

18. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the third logic unit attempts to establish a real-time communications connection between the user and the alternate service provider.
19. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the real-time communications connection is a telephone connection.
20. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the real-time communications connection is the Internet connection.
21. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the first logic unit provides the list of providers to the user via a web page.
22. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the second logic unit receives the user's selection via a web page.

23. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the third logic unit provides a list of the alternate service providers to the user via a web page.
24. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.
25. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 24, wherein the information provider's information is provided as a recorded transmission.
26. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 24, wherein the information provider's information is provided as a communication with a live person.

27-31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein a system administrator can establish the set of criteria.
33. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein a user establishes the set of criteria.
34. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein, in response to a connection established between the selected service provider and the user, the fourth logic unit presents the alternate service provider after communication is completed with the selected service provider.

35-36. (Canceled)

37. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:
sending a user a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider on the list;
receiving from the user a selection of a service provider on the list;
attempting to establish real-time communications between the user and the selected service provider; and
offering the user an option to connect to an alternate service provider elected in advance by the selected service provider, including searching a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria comprising one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, subject matter, and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users

38-39. (Canceled)

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the communications established between the selected service provider and the user is a telephone connection.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the communications established between the selected service provider and the user is the Internet connection.

42. (Canceled)

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, in response to a connection established between the selected service provider and the user, providing the option to connect to the alternate service provider after the communications ends between the user and the selected service provider.
44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.
45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 44, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.
46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 44, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.
- 47-48. (Canceled)
49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the user can determine the range.
50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein a system administrator can determine the range.
- 51-52. (Canceled)
53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein a system administrator can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.
- 55-56. (Canceled)
57. (Previously Presented) A method of rerouting a user from a selected service provider to an alternate service provider, the method comprising:
providing access to a database of alternate service providers when a selected provider cannot be reached;
searching a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria comprising one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users; and
providing a user with a list of alternate service providers.
58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.
59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.
60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 58, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the user can select an alternate service provider from the list and be connected to the alternate service provider.
62. (Original) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider receives a pre-established percentage of any commission paid to the alternate service provider.
63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is given an option to provide access to the database when the selected service provider creates an initial listing.
64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 63, wherein the option defaults to allow access to the database.
65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is notified of a missed connection with the user.
66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 65, wherein the notice comes in a form of an e-mail.
- 67-68. (Canceled)
69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the user can determine the predetermined range.
70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein a system administrator can determine the predetermined range.

71. (Canceled)

72. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein a system administrator can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

74-76. (Canceled)

77. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable ~~machine-readable~~ storage medium tangibly embodying a sequence of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method comprising:
sending a user a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provided on the list;
receiving from the user a selection of a service provider;
attempting to establish real-time communications between the user and the selected service provider; and
offering the user an option to connect to an alternate service provider elected in advance by the selected service provider, including searching a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria comprising one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users.

78-79. (Canceled)

80. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the communication established between the selected service provider and the user is a telephone connection.
81. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the communication established between the selected service provider and the user is an Internet connection.
82. (Canceled)
83. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the option to connect to the alternate service provider is sent after the communications ends between the user and the selected service provider.
84. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.
85. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 84, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.
86. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 84, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

87-88. (Canceled)

89. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the user can determine the range.

90. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein a system administrator can determine the range.

91-92. (Canceled)

93. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable medium of claim 77, wherein a system administrator establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

94. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

95-96. (Canceled)

97. (Previously Presented) A system for establishing a real-time communication connection between two parties, the system comprising:
a communications interface; and
a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer having:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers via an Internet connection,
the list to indicate a real-time availability and a rate of each of the service providers;

a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the selected service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database of alternate service providers, in response to a failed attempt to connect the selected service provider and the user, for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider, wherein the set of criteria comprises one or more of: a rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider and a reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users, the fourth logic unit to reconnect the selected service provider to the user when the selected service provider signals availability.

98. (Canceled)
99. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 97, wherein the user can specify a method by which the selected service provider is reconnected with the user.
100. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 97, wherein the user can set a time limit on when to reconnect to the selected service provider.
101. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the system is remote to the user.

102. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 101, wherein the database is searched for the alternative service provider based at least on reliability factor indicating a ratio of successful attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users to total attempts to connect the alternate service provider and previous users.
103. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 102, wherein the database is searched for the alternative service provider based at least on one or more of: rate within a predetermined range of a rate of the selected service provider, and subject matter.